

Contemporary Alutiiq Mask Project
Creative Writing describing "A Process"
Old Harbor School (grades 6-8)

Lena S. Amason-Berns (Artist/ Visiting Art Instructor)

Class time: 10 hrs. Additional prep time 4.5 hrs

Unit Essential learning Questions: Describe the creative process involved in creating a contemporary style Alutiiq mask.

Alaska State Content and Performance Standards (2006) for the Arts:

-A4, A6, A7

-B1, B2, B7

Learning Materials:

"Exposition Alaska Present" Musee - Boulogne-Sur Mer June 2016

"Decolonizing Alaska" Asia Freeman, Curator/Artistic/Executive Director Bunnell Street Arts Center 2016

"Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation 2" Contemporary Native North American Art from the West, Northwest and Pacific. Museum of Art and Design 2006

"A Companion to the Giinaquq: Like a Face Exhibition. Two Journeys" 2008 Alutiiq Museum and Archeological Repository

"Kodiak, Alaska, Les masques de la collection Alphonse Pinart" Musee duquai Branly" 2002 Paris

Art Materials: 1/2 sheet of plywood per student, Acrylic paints, variety of sized brushes, containers for mixing paint, drop cloth, pencils, palm sanders, jig saw, dust masks, safety glasses, hanging hardware. pens, clip boards, note cards for drawing. sand paper for palm sanders, blades for jigsaw.

Procedure:

Day 1- Freestyle painting on 1/2 sheets of plywood, for the purpose of "working up the surface of the plywood". Students fill plastic cups with "warm" (reds, yellows, oranges, pinks) acrylic colors. Instructions are to paint freely on all boards with out worrying about making anything specific. Students are told that, at this point, no one owns a board. We listen to good music and paint our moods.

Day 2- Short presentation on Abstract expressionist painters including: Hans Hoffman, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, William De Kooning, Picasso. Same instructions as the day before.., but this time we use "cool colors" (blues, greens). Students notice how warm and cool colors contrast nicely and make the colors pop.

Day 3- Research and Draw- We listen to music while studying and drawing the basic shapes of Ancient Alutiiq masks from books. What similarities do these Alutiiq masks have? What are the elements of design which define their style as uniquely Alutiiq?

Also, on your own, research animals, birds, fish from our area that interest you. Sketch ideas of how you could incorporate these forms into an "Alutiiq style mask".

Study, Research and Draw ideas you like from the Contemporary Native Art resources provided and those you may find on your own. Design your own original contemporary Alutiiq mask.

Day 4 - (Prep)- cut plywood in half, so that each student has two pieces on which to draw their designs. Each student will create two masks.

Students draw out basic mask forms on plywood first with paint, then more detailed drawing of the lines into the wet paint with a pencil. When dry, forms are cut out of plywood with jigsaw. (students can do this with adult supervision and proper safety gear).

Day 5 - sanding- students familiarize themselves with various palm sanders, how to switch out fresh sandpaper, make sure long hair is tied back, safety dust masks and glasses on. Students spend this time sanding edges and top painted surface of mask forms.

Day 6 - Next they will sand, paint with the opposite color family than the previous painting session, and draw into the wet paint with the pencil. Let dry.

Day 7 - Drill holes and attach fishing twine and a few beads to secure line. They will problem solve and figure out if their mask is just for the wall to wear,....or if it needs to have some kind of handles...so that it can be comfortable to hold on to in performance.

Optional Day 8- There will be one more sanding session...for desired texture,..and allowing layers of color to peak through. They will have the choice to paint at least once more with finer detail brushes. I will encourage them to choose colors that already already found on their mask, with the option of mixing those colors with white.

Reflection - On the last day we will look at all of the masks together and discuss what we learned, what we liked, what we would do differently. I also would like to do a short slide presentation of my own work.